

Maine Regional Library System Survey

Comments and Recommendations

May 2001

General Comments

1. The overall number of respondents (286*) is sufficient to consider the results of the survey to be valid. The number of public libraries responding (approximately 50%) was particularly high. The proportion of libraries responding from each district is also relatively equal, which would suggest that the data is valid for the entire state and not just one district.
2. There was a reasonable degree of commonality in most of the responses to most of the open-ended questions.
3. The detailed information in the open-ended questions will provide the district consultants and the state library staff with considerable insight into specific issues that interest Maine librarians.
4. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the people who replied to the survey indicated that they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the services they receive from their library district – 74% said they were *very satisfied*.
5. ARRC, SCOOP and MELIBS seem to be particularly popular services. They are heavily used and people like them.
6. Most of the people who responded like, trust, respect, and rely on their district consultants. That was true for all three districts.

*130 public libraries, 125 school libraries, 13 academic libraries, 14 special libraries (4 unidentified)

Recommendations of the Regional Library Evaluation and Assessment Steering Committee*

1. Continuing Education. The survey shows a clear need for expanded and improved training and continuing education opportunities on a wide variety of topics. In order to expand and improve training and continuing education opportunities for library professionals and para-professionals, this committee recommends that the Maine Library Commission appoint a study committee, broadly representative of Maine libraries and current providers of continuing education, to examine what is available, what needs to be addressed, and what would be the best vehicle for delivery of needed workshops, classes and conferences. The committee could also provide long-range planning and be the clearing-house (e.g. centralized calendar) for all continuing education opportunities in the state.

2. **Strengthen Maine InfoNet.** The survey shows the greatest single concern about participating in Maine InfoNet is increased costs for postage, packing materials, and staff time. The committee recommends strengthening Maine InfoNet by providing a delivery system and/or financial support to underwrite costs associated with increased interlibrary loans.
3. **Specialized Consulting Services.** The survey indicates almost no support for changing the current district consultant job descriptions from generalist to specialist. There is, however, support for additional specialized consulting services for local libraries. This committee recommends that the Commission identify ways to provide access to consulting services in the following areas:
 - Technology
 - School libraries
 - Buildings/Facilities
 - Children's services
4. **Statewide Resource Sharing.** The survey shows that ARRC services have a high level of use and support. Although the survey responses did not support a statewide borrower's card, the committee recommends that other methods of resource sharing be explored and strengthened.
5. **Equitable District Service.** Approximately 50% of the respondents appear open to a discussion of adding one or more districts, although there is no clear mandate to do this. If another district is added, most people think it should be carved from the Northern Maine Library District. The committee recommends that the Commission ensure equitable services for all library districts, including a full-time consultant for each district and dedicated support staff in each district office.

*Committee members: Chair, Linda Lord, Library Development Director, Maine State Library; Elizabeth Moran, Chair, Maine Library Commission and Past President MLA; Suzan Nelson, President MASL; Sheldon Kaye, SMLD ARRC Portland Public Library; Barbara McDade, NMLD ARRC Bangor Public Library; Benita Davis, NMLD Consultant; Amy Averre, Chair NMLD Executive Board; Bonnie Dwyer, CMLD Consultant; Susan Lowe, Chair CMLD Executive Board; Shirley Helfrich, Consultant SMLD; Deborah Locke, Chair SMLD Executive Board (Members of this committee will remain in place until completion of the study.)

Ex officio: Sandra Nelson, Consultant; Richard Arnold, Facilitator